

# Thoreau Society Bulletin

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## On Teaching Thoreau

*Bill Schechter*

**D**o the teachers among you ever feel that you can lead your students to *Walden*, but can't make them read?

I've been asked to share what I learned about teaching Thoreau at Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School, where I was privileged to offer a course about the man and his writings for a decade (1998-2008). I won't attempt to explain *why* Thoreau should be taught. That would be preaching to the choir. However, I can't resist pointing out a paradoxical challenge that he himself created. He wrote a book so great, so canonical, by now so ingrained in American culture and identity that students may feel they know him without actually having read him. It's much easier to get the gist of the book—to breathe it in, as it were—than actively to explore its genius. The work is on every short list of American classics. But how many Americans have read it? How many fewer have read Thoreau's other writings?

By getting down to specifics, we may yet find the "hard bottom" of Thoreau studies in high school.

### What to Read, and When:

Any book or author can be taught to any grade level, if done in an age-appropriate way. How meaningfully the material can be taught is another question altogether. In an early incarnation of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), Thoreau was relegated to the fourth grade curriculum framework. Apparently, elementary school pupils were expected to fill in the correct bubble demonstrating they knew there was once a man who lived in a little cabin by the shore of a pond. A start, I guess.

At Lincoln-Sudbury, I taught an elective course called "Meet Mr. Thoreau" for juniors and seniors, though one or two sophomores usually managed to sneak their way in. In my experience, the tenth graders had a much harder time reading Thoreau than the older students. Expecting sophomores to bull their way through the "Economy" chapter of *Walden*, to appreciate the complex structure of the book, to grasp classical allusion, and to successfully follow long and winding

(albeit well-groomed) trails of Thoreauvian thought may not be realistic. The challenge might even frustrate them enough to turn them off Thoreau. In the *Walden* chapter "Reading," Thoreau speaks of the enduring value of the classics, and praises books that make us stand on "tip-toe" to understand them. As it turned out, Thoreau wrote just such a book, but even on "tip-toes" younger students might still pull up a bit short.

Having said this, I am nevertheless aware that many required American literature courses are offered in the tenth grade. That being the case, summaries or targeted readings of passages or aphoristic lines from *Walden* might work best for sophomores. There is certainly no shortage of relevant topics in the book to interest them.

Now, inspired by a surprising reference to "ball games" I came across in Thoreau's journal, I want to throw a curve ball. Actually, I don't think it's best to start *any* students off with *Walden*, for all the reasons mentioned and for another, as well. Reading and discussing the book as it deserves takes a generous slice of time. I used the book in an independent studies class—the sequel to "Meet Mr. Thoreau"—and found that even allocating an academic quarter to *Walden* required us to move at a brisk clip.

Instead, I preferred to introduce Thoreau through his essays. At a dollar a book, the Dover paper edition with its five essays provided an additional benefit: students were able to take their copies home and to mark them up. I found that essays like "Walking," "Life Without Principle," "Civil Disobedience," and "A Plea for Captain John Brown" offered an excellent overview of Thoreau's thought and a friendlier welcome to his writing than the daunting "Economy" chapter.

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Running to about twenty pages each, the essays also built a strong foundation for a later reading of *Walden*.

### Pedagogy:

I liked using memoirs and novels in all of my history classes, but it was tough to counteract the CliffsNotes options for them on the Internet. I wanted to figure out a pedagogy that actively involved students and that encouraged them to struggle with Thoreau's prose and ideas. The approach I settled on consisted of assigning pages to students and having them present them in class. After the presentation, their classmates could comment or express disagreement.

Through the presentations and the accompanying discussion, we first tried to get at what Thoreau was saying, line-by-line, though always making certain not to lose the main idea or argument. We'd then return to the text to discuss ideas or passages that had the most contemporary resonance. This never required great effort because Thoreau's concerns are so stunningly relevant. Before we knew it, the road was open to wonderful discussions about environmentalism, our personal connections to nature, conscience, politics, religion, spirituality, law, violence, materialism, technological change, and so on. It reminded me of being told as a child that if we dug deeply enough, we would reach China. Thoreau dug so deeply, he reached us.

### Supporting curriculum:

Surely, every author can be taught creatively. Students can assume the identity of a Shakespearian character, write a new last chapter for a Faulkner novel, or beam Jane Eyre into the twenty-first century. Teaching Thoreau, however, offers unique possibilities for engaging students, which can, in turn, deepen their understanding of the man, his ideas, their world, and themselves. Most of these supporting activities will require them to rise from their chairs and leave the classroom. This should not be too surprising, for Thoreau himself tells us in "Notes on Fruits," "To attend chiefly to the desk or schoolhouse, while we neglect the scenery in which it is placed, is absurd." In the next sentence, he warns: "If we do not look out we shall find our fine schoolhouse standing in a cow yard at last." I would add that these activities can be as much fun as they are enriching.

The overarching theme for all that follows could be summed up thus: go beyond discussion; *do* what Thoreau did; react and respond in the moment; then compare your responses to his. Through such means, you may strike up a conversation with Thoreau that crosses centuries.

The teacher should never lose sight of the multiple aspects of Thoreau the writer and the man, which lend themselves to a wide range of learning activities:

*Thoreau was an intellectual  
who could work with his hands.*

At Lincoln-Sudbury, we applied to a foundation for funds to build a replica of Thoreau's cabin. We completed this project in 1998. Students in the "Meet Mr. Thoreau" class have used the space ever since for "solos" to experience the

solitude that the most famous Walden resident described. This was an expensive undertaking because we wanted to build the cabin the old-fashioned way, with big timbers and hand tools. The cost would have been dramatically reduced had we used modern two-by-fours. But in practice, any kind of hut will do, even one made of cardboard. Imagination can overcome dire funding issues. And if cabin construction doesn't suit your circumstances, there are always pencils to make. We had great fun doing this at Lincoln-Sudbury. It was wonderful to see college prep students using the machines in our wood shop. Many had never picked up a tool before. If the Thoreau family improved the pencil, so did we, with backscratcher pencils, flute pencils, and "earcils" coming off our production line. Reading that Thoreau made pencils is one thing; making your own is another. It draws you closer to the man.

*He was a writer.*

If you live anywhere near Concord, take your students to the Concord Free Public Library, where they can develop a better understanding of Thoreau's creative process by examining original manuscripts. If you live far from Concord, take advantage of online manuscript resources.

*He was an observer of nature  
and our greatest nature writer.*

Like Thoreau, we must learn not just to look but to see. In their own neighborhoods, students can find the same sky, stars, rainbows, snowstorms, autumn leaves that Thoreau viewed and described. The same heaven that was under his feet is under theirs. Describe it. Compare the attempt with his. Also, take some time to check out the trees near the school. What are their names? Immerse yourself in the natural detail of your own locale.

*He lived for a time at Walden Pond.*

Go there. Feel the peace. Watch the sun rise. *Experience* the transcendental beauty of nature. Too far from Walden Pond? Then check out the Walden nearest you. As Thoreau emphasized, there are Waldens everywhere, although they go by many names. A terrarium or a single beautiful flower will do in a pinch. If you can't get permission for a field trip, darken the classroom by turning off the lights. Have the students put their heads down. Play recordings of birds, frogs, and night sounds. No one can stop a field trip in the mind.

*He advocated the embrace of solitude and simplicity.*

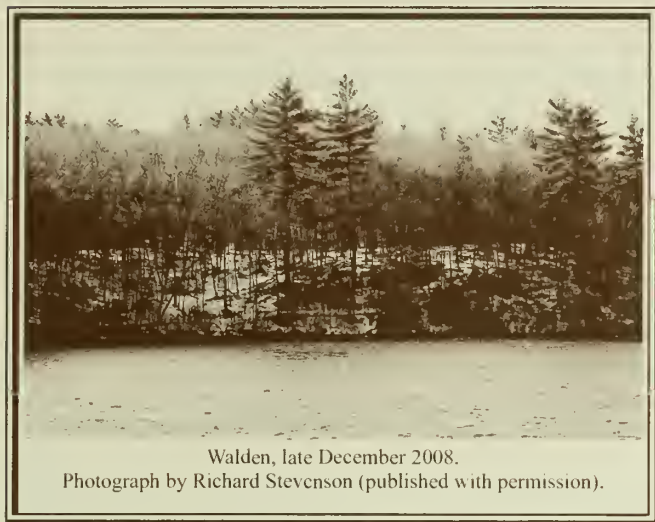
Urge the class to forgo shopping for two weeks. Or ask your students to spend three solitary hours, without friends or technology, and to report on the experience.

These are just a few ideas, each with many variations. None of them are contrivances or simulations. They offer real experiences that Thoreau knew well. If the responses to them differ across time and generations, so much the better for encouraging a dialogue between "equals" who have shared similar experiences.

Once upon a time—as recently as the 1960s—a belief



in the value of experiential learning prevailed. This belief was earlier a hallmark of a certain young Concord teacher who enjoyed taking his students on excursions through the meadows and woods of his native town. There is a place for classrooms in Thoreau courses, but also a time to leave them. Certainly, Henry David Thoreau had his own strong pedagogical preferences. As he wrote in "Wild Apples," "So there is one *thought* for the field, another for the house. I would have my thoughts, like wild apples, to be food for walkers, and will not warrant them to be palatable, if tasted in the house."



Walden, late December 2008.

Photograph by Richard Stevenson (published with permission).

## American Wilderness: A Review

*William Rossi*

Michael Lewis, ed. *American Wilderness: A New History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. 290 p.

This excellent collection of fourteen essays, plus an epilogue by environmental historian Donald Worster, explores the intellectual and spiritual origins, social history, politics, and global consequences of Americans' schizophrenic love of wilderness. From 9.1 million acres of national wilderness set aside forty-five years ago through the historic Wilderness Act, Americans now enjoy over 106 million acres more or less protected from roads, motorized vehicles, and power equipment. Yet, while having loved, hiked, and idealized wilderness for generations and in increasing numbers, contemporary U.S. society has become the most environmentally destructive on earth, whether "measured by resource use, energy consumption, per capita trash production, [or] other pollution measures," Michael Lewis writes in his introduction. As we sit at home planning the next wilderness adventure, "the resources of the world's forests and fields surround us, from the wood of our furniture to the food in our refrigerators" (4).

In the 1990s, William Cronon and other historians generated an intense debate by arguing that the engine driving this destructive relation was in part the traditional

idea of wilderness as a pristine landscape untouched by human hands. A deeply held, even spiritual belief, initially mobilized as a reaction against industrialization, the idea of pristine wilderness, Cronon argued, has actually enabled rather than restrained industrialization. For those who can afford to escape periodically to "pure" landscapes can also afford to be guilt-free about fouling their own and their neighbors' nests. Attention should be focused instead on maintaining wildness within settled landscapes where humans might thrive with it. New wilderness historians argued that many native peoples in North America and elsewhere, as well as backwoods dwellers who never heard of the Sierra Club, in fact did just that for generations.

This remarkably cohesive volume presents the scholarly fruits of the new wilderness debate, a detailed reassessment of the history of U.S. attitudes and policies toward wilderness from Contact to the present. Although spanning five hundred years, the book reads like a composition for orchestra and chorus. Besides a history of the wilderness movement and its evolving visions of conservation and politics, major themes and counter-themes include: the negative effects of wilderness preservation, in North America and globally, on diverse groups whose domesticated landscapes have been made "wild"; the various national and nationalist dimensions of wilderness thought; and changing ideas and cultural expressions that have shaped American wilderness thinking, from Reformed Protestant religious traditions to nineteenth-century landscape painting to conservation science. These themes are set in the wider context of the ever-present tension between forces of modernity (agricultural expansion, population, settlement, industrialization), accumulating environmental degradation, and the need for a global conservation ethic.

In the history of wilderness and of American wilderness ideas, Henry Thoreau sang a special part, one he wrote himself. His thoughts on the subject were complicated, though, and vulnerable to oversimplification. During the early 1960s, part of Thoreau's song proved useful to Sierra Club Director David Brower, in efforts to draw affluent supporters of wilderness preservation with coffee-table books and calendars. In the 1990s wilderness debate, Thoreau could be invoked on either side of the dominant philosophical issue of whether wilderness is a real thing or a cultural construction. Fortunately for us and for Thoreau, Brad Dean accepted the task of presenting the complexity of Thoreau's thinking and his efforts on behalf of preservation.

Brad worked hard and long on his essay for this collection, "Natural History, Romanticism, and Thoreau," and he was justifiably proud of it. Much of his argument will be familiar to Thoreauvians, especially friends lucky enough to have been treated to long strands of it in conversations over beer. Initially conditioned by early nineteenth-century romanticism and the culture of natural history into which he was born, Thoreau saw wilderness in ways decisively molded by Emersonian Transcendentalism, "a worldview that he expanded in distinctive ways but never forsook" (77). Having inherited a conception of the universe as composed of matter and spirit, and carrying Emerson's definition of nature as "essences unchanged by man" into the Maine woods, Thoreau realized acutely atop Katahdin that "while his body was at home in 'the actual world' of matter, his spirit was emphatically not

at home in such "unfinished parts of the globe" (79). This awakening interest in his bodily relations to material nature led further, in the tonic-of-wildness paragraph of *Walden* (partly inspired by his climb), to the recognition that "the prevalence of death in the universe teaches the lesson of life," a process Dean dubs the "Thoreauvian eternal return" (80).

The next major development in Thoreau's wilderness thought occurs in "Walking." Although often considered the author's last word on wilderness because of its posthumous publication, in a manuscript passage Brad discovered while working on the early 1850s lecture version, Thoreau himself described this talk as "a sort of introduction to all" he would write thereafter. This illuminating comment, one of many archival treasures Brad collected, glowed in his mind for fifteen years as he turned over its significance. Another was the discovery, in an 1853 addition to this lecture, of what may be Thoreau's earliest statement on behalf of preserving wild tracts "for inspiration and our own true re-creation," five years before that sentiment appears in "Chesuncook" and, later, in "Huckleberries."

If, in making his statement that "In wildness is the preservation of the world," Thoreau "fired his [own] 'shot heard round the world,'" Brad effectively repossesses that famous line from its pure wilderness interpretation in a way that's true both to the constructed and the physical reality of wildness as Thoreau conceived it (82). As "the primal life force of the universe," Dean claims, wildness is "recycled in nature's eternal return of life, death, and rebirth—a recycling which literally preserves the physical world" (83). The "restorative, therapeutic effect" of witnessing this power and process (as Thoreau describes them in the "Spring" chapter of *Walden*) derives from the decentering of humanity it implies. As Brad put it, presciently: "We, too, shall die one day and return our mite of wildness to nature's eternal return. Witnessing our own limits transgressed helps us to understand that we as human beings are not the measure of all things, that we are simply part and parcel of the infinite and eternal universe" (83).

Resituating "Walking" as a mid-career summation also sheds light on the role Thoreau's late natural history projects played in his wilderness thought. Ten years of field work combined with inspiration from Darwin's evolutionary theory enabled him to develop, within a framework of Transcendentalist assumptions about the universe, "a highly sophisticated, truly ecological understanding of wilderness and the rest of the physical world" (87).

Among many other rich essays in this collection, two speak directly to Thoreau's continued influence today. In "Creating Wild Places from Domesticated Landscapes: The Internationalization of the American Wilderness Concept," Christopher Conte examines how exporting the ideal of a people-free wilderness to Africa, Asia, and South America has brought rural communities into conflict with international conservation organizations whose government-backed policies have been shaped by biological studies of natural ecosystems, independent of human interaction. Transplanting American wilderness ideology into these places, he claims, effectively continues the legacy of colonial and postcolonial authoritarian rule by fostering "authoritarian wilderness protection in the international sphere" (225). Citing the more historical, holistic vision that characterized the romantic science of Thoreau's

contemporaries Charles Darwin, Alexander von Humboldt, and Alfred Russel Wallace, Conte urges developing cross-cultural perspectives in conservation science by consulting recent work in environmental history and anthropology on the ways that human societies have lived with wildness, shaping savanna and forest environments, for example, into productive landscapes. If the nineteenth-century holists Conte mentions exhibited plenty of ambivalence about indigenous life, neither was Thoreau immune from the widespread belief among his white countrymen that American Indians were destined for extinction. Yet Thoreau not only developed a keen historical sense of landscape change. He also increasingly appreciated both the effects of indigenous management practices and the knowledge implicit in wise Native use of wild fruits. Had he lived longer, one suspects he would have further refined a conservation ethic by following these paths.

Finally, as Lewis notes, "the wilderness idea has never been just an American idea." It is rather "part of the more global history of modernity and its discontents" (12). In his epilogue Donald Worster argues that, while so deeply intertwined with American identity and history, our affinity for wilderness may owe more to the extension of liberal democratic ideals to nature, particularly personal liberty and social equality, than to any essentially "American" quality. The high correlation between wildlands protection and democratic, conservation-minded societies as well as the procedures of and wide participation in the 1992 Earth Summit suggest as much. To date more than one hundred and eighty countries have signed and ratified the Kyoto Protocol. That the United States remains the only signatory not to ratify perhaps brings us back again to Thoreau. Not only are "all good things . . . wild and free," but the "effect of . . . good government is to make [all] life more valuable."

## Thoreau, Jung, and the Collective Unconscious

Neil B. Yetwin

On the morning of April 6, 1940, American philanthropist Paul Mellon and his wife Mary hiked through the old Swiss town of Intragna with renowned psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung. The Mellons had attended seminars offered by Jung in 1937 and 1938 and had subsequently forged a close relationship with him. Impressed by the potential curative applications of Jung's theories, they traveled to Switzerland for analytic sessions at his Küsnacht home to treat Mary Mellon's severe asthma.

Later that April day in 1940, Paul Mellon opened his diary and recorded an exchange that took place when the walkers stopped to eat lunch in the shade of an old bridge:

I told Jung about Thoreau mentioning Indian custom of burning everything they own every year. Also that he used the word unconscious seemingly in the proper sense. Jung said, "Anyone who has lived in a primitive way and who *thinks* will naturally come to know about the unconscious. It only goes to show how many silly asses have done it who don't think."



Mellon shared an abbreviated version of his diary entry at a memorial service for Jung in New York on December 1, 1961: "I talked to him about Thoreau, saying that Thoreau seemed to use the word 'unconscious' in the same sense as himself."<sup>2</sup>

The conversation at Intragna may have been the only occasion when Mellon and Jung discussed Thoreau. Nevertheless, it suggests some intriguing parallels between Jung and Thoreau. Indeed, a Jung essay on Thoreau was "long rumored among Thoreauvians to exist," but an exhaustive search through Jung's personal library and unpublished manuscripts in 1971 failed to uncover any evidence that the psychiatrist was familiar with Thoreau prior to that spring day.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, it is significant that these two thinkers—although separated by 3,700 miles and a century—produced startlingly similar observations on some of the mainsprings of human psychology.

Jung's reputation rests upon his development of analytical psychology, so-called to differentiate it from Freud's libido-based psychoanalysis. The language Jung employed (including the terms "complex," "archetype," "introvert," "extrovert," "anima," and "animus," for example) forms part of the lexicon of contemporary psychology and has had an impact on all of the social sciences as well as the arts and literature.

His most significant formulation was the concept of the collective unconscious, which he described as "the deepest layer of the psyche, containing the experiences, fears, memories and all cognitive perceptions shared by all human beings on earth."<sup>4</sup> Each unique individual, he wrote, "also represents the 'eternal man' or 'man' as a species and thus has a share in all the movements of the collective unconscious."<sup>5</sup> Jung spent decades struggling to demonstrate that we carry "the whole living part in the lower storeys [sic] of the skyscraper of rational consciousness . . . The true history of the mind is not preserved in learned volumes," he insisted, "but in the living psychic organism of every individual," and asked, "Aren't we the carriers of the entire history of mankind?"<sup>6</sup>

Yet Thoreau suspected the existence of this deepest and most mysterious layer of man's unconscious and posed a similar question decades before Jung. He asked, "Was not Asia mapped in my brain before it was in any geography?," to which he replied, "In my brain is the sanskrit which contains the history of the primitive times."<sup>7</sup> Thoreau often alluded to an unconscious link to our archaic past. "I am related to the earliest times and to the latest,"<sup>8</sup> he announced, and expressed surprise at the unexpected success of his gardening efforts in like terms: "I am convinced that my genius dates from an older era than the agricultural."<sup>9</sup>

Over the years, a few writers have linked Thoreau and Jung without drawing a full comparison. As early as 1939, Henry Seidel Canby attributed Thoreau's "unsatisfied desires" and "symptoms of a mind in distress" to "[t]hat *anima* of his, as Jung would call it."<sup>10</sup> Michael Berger has described Thoreau's understanding of how one's limited mind in a semi-conscious dream state can descend into the infinite mind as couched in "terms that seem to anticipate Jung's theory of the collective unconscious."<sup>11</sup> And Steven F. Walker pointed out that Jung's collective unconscious shares the Enlightenment idea of "a universal human nature" with Thoreau, who "uses the same biological analogy as Jung in *Walden*: 'For the improvements of

ages have had but little influence on the essential laws of man's existence; as our skeletons, probably, are not to be distinguished from those of our ancestors.'"<sup>12</sup>

Certainly Thoreau was not alone among the New England Transcendentalists in recognizing the distinctive signs of the collective unconscious. Social psychologist William McGuire called Emerson's "History," for example, "a regular parade of 'Jungian' ideas and instances."<sup>13</sup> Jungian analyst Edward F. Edinger called attention to the "numerous parallels between the intuitive insights of Emerson and the



"Midwinter"—photograph by Herbert Wendell Gleason, from Volume 2 of the 1906 Manuscript Edition of Thoreau's *Journal*.

The last half of January was warm & thawy. The swift streams were open & the muskrats were seen swimming & diving & bringing up clams leaving their shells on the ice. We had now forgotten summer & autumn, but had already begun to anticipate spring. Fishermen improved the warmer weather to fish for pickerel through the ice— Before it was only the Autumn landscape with a thin layer of snow upon it we saw the withered flowers through it—but now we do not think of autumn when we look on this snow. That earth is effectually buried— It is mid winter.

*Journal*, February 9, 1851

empirically established psychology of Jung." Citing Emerson's descriptions in "History" of "the one mind common to all men" and "this universal mind," Edinger declared that the essay "describes clearly what Jung has termed the collective unconscious."<sup>14</sup> And in the front matter to the popular collection *The Portable Emerson*, Malcolm Cowley pointed out that Emerson's concept of the "Over-Soul often seems close to the Jungian notion of a collective unconscious."<sup>15</sup>

Emerson's connection with Jung has unquestionably drawn greater scholarly attention and commentary than Thoreau's, possibly because it is more visibly reflected in his writings. Emerson continually elaborated upon his insights in his well-attended lectures and systematically arranged them into essays for publication. Moreover, his letters and journals anticipated Jung's thought in including classic examples of Jungian archetypes from the collective unconscious. Thoreau experienced similar flashes of perception into the unconscious, but recorded them only sporadically in his journals and finished works.<sup>16</sup>

Jung emphasized that the collective unconscious exercises a crucial function beyond its role as the birthplace of archetypes. He admitted that it was virtually impossible for individuals fully to bridge the gap between their conscious and unconscious lives. Yet this very struggle, he thought, encouraged the realization of what he called "individuation"—the attainment of a personal sense of balance, wholeness, and self-knowledge while remaining true to oneself. This undertaking, Jung hoped, might foster awareness of our "invisible system of relations to the unconscious."<sup>17</sup>

Nearly eighty years before Jung, Thoreau described the therapeutic value of the attempt to unite the conscious with the unconscious mind (the very heart of Jungian individuation):

Both a conscious and an unconscious life are good. Neither is good exclusively, for both have the same source. The wisely conscious life springs out of an unconscious suggestion . . . Indeed, it is by obeying the suggestions of a higher light within you that you escape from yourself and, in the transit, as it were see with the unworn sides of your eye, travel totally new paths.<sup>18</sup>

At its most elemental, then, Jung's exploration of the unconscious echoed some of Thoreau's earlier observations.

Jung also believed that the collective unconscious provides fertile ground for the archetypes forming the basis of our religious and philosophical beliefs as well as our dreams, fantasies, and fairytales, all of which are represented by universally recognizable characters and symbols. Thoreau, too, had observed that "The characteristics and pursuits of various ages and races of men are always existing in epitome in every neighborhood."<sup>19</sup> And like Jung, he perceived how diverse ethnic and religious groups respond similarly to those archetypal images that emerge from the collective unconscious in the form of humorous folktales and sacred stories: "All nations love the same jests and tales, Jews, Christians and Mahometans, and the same translated suffice for all. All men are children, and of one family. The same tale sends them all to bed, and wakes them in the morning."<sup>20</sup>

After more than half a century of inquiry, Jung concluded that the core of our being "is strange to us and yet so near, wholly ourselves and yet unknowable."<sup>21</sup> Could this have been what Thoreau meant when he detected the "certain doubleness" and "presence" in oneself "that is no more I than

it is you"?<sup>22</sup> Jung called this unconscious "virtual centre of so mysterious a constitution" the "self," but added that it "might equally well be called 'the God within us'."<sup>23</sup> If aware of Thoreau, he might have found validation of his own theories in Thoreau's assessment of the unconscious self, recorded in the journal entry for February 13, 1840: "The unconsciousness of man—is the consciousness of God—the end of the world."<sup>24</sup>

Thoreau and Jung both suggested that while we may never discover the true nature of the psyche, our odyssey through the collective unconscious might spur us on to the creative realization of (in Jung's words) "more and more consciousness."<sup>25</sup> Thoreau attempted that journey during his own lifetime, employing his mind (as he wrote in *Walden*) as a kind of "divining rod," burrowing its way into "the secret of things," always hoping to strike "the richest vein" of all, the self.<sup>26</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Paul Mellon, *Reflections in a Silver Spoon: A Memoir* (New York: William Morrow, 1992), 168. Mellon was referring to a passage in the "Economy" chapter of Thoreau's *Walden*; see *Walden*, ed. J. Lyndon Shanley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 68.

<sup>2</sup> *Carl Gustav Jung 1875-1961: A Memorial Meeting*, New York, December 1, 1961 (New York: The Analytical Psychology Club of New York, 1962), 26.

<sup>3</sup> William McGuire, "Footnotes on Jung and Transcendentalism," *Spring: A Journal of Archetype and Culture* (1971): 136-140.

<sup>4</sup> Carl G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, ed. Herbert Reid, Michael Fordham, and Gerhard Adler (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 9: 3-4.

<sup>5</sup> Jung, *Collected Works*, 9: 42.

<sup>6</sup> Jung, *The Collected Works*, ed. Reid, Fordham, and Adler (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), 11: 35.

<sup>7</sup> Henry D. Thoreau, *Journal, Volume 1: 1837-1844*, ed. Elizabeth Hall Witherell, William L. Howarth, Robert Sattelmeyer, and Thomas Blanding (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 387.

<sup>8</sup> Thoreau, *Journal IX: August 16, 1856-August 7, 1857*, ed. Bradford Torrey (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1906), 218.

<sup>9</sup> Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, ed. Carl F. Hovde, William L. Howarth, and Elizabeth Hall Witherell (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 54.

<sup>10</sup> Henry Seidel Canby, *Thoreau* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1939), 449. According to Jung, the "anima" is the bridge between individual consciousness and the collective unconscious.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Berger, *Thoreau's Late Career and The Dispersion of Seeds: The Saunterer's Synoptic Vision* (Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House, 2000), 106.

<sup>12</sup> Steven F. Walker, *Jung and the Jungians on Myth* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 9; Thoreau, *Walden*, 12.

<sup>13</sup> McGuire, "Footnotes on Jung and Transcendentalism," 137-138.

<sup>14</sup> Edward F. Edinger, "Ralph Waldo Emerson: Naturalist of the Soul," *Spring: A Journal of Archetype and Culture* (1965): 79, 88-89.

<sup>15</sup> Malcolm Cowley, "A Note on the Selections," *The Portable Emerson*, ed. Carl Bode in collaboration with Malcolm Cowley, new ed. (New York: Penguin, 1981), xxxiv.

<sup>16</sup> Len Gougeon ably summarizes Jung's archetypes within the context of Transcendentalism to include "myths, stories, tales, histories, sagas, religious accounts, songs, and rituals, as well as iconography, among widely diverse populations and civilizations over vast periods of time." He credits Emerson as the major influence on a group he calls the "psychomythic humanists" (including Joseph Campbell, Erich Neumann, Mircea Eliade, and Norman O. Brown), who have turned to the paradigm of the collective unconscious for intellectual sustenance and whose work Gougeon interprets as in harmony with nineteenth-century Transcendentalism. Gougeon considers the possibility that Thoreau moved to Walden to reestablish "an essential linkage between the unconscious intuitive/spiritual self and the natural world." See Gougeon, *Emerson & Eros: The Making of a Cultural Hero* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 9-12, 52.



<sup>17</sup> Jung, *The Collected Works*, ed. Reid, Fordham, and Adler (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 7: 195.

<sup>18</sup> Thoreau, *Journal IX*, 37-38.

<sup>19</sup> Thoreau, *Week*, 23.

<sup>20</sup> Thoreau, *Week*, 59-60.

<sup>21</sup> Jung, *The Collected Works*, 7: 237.

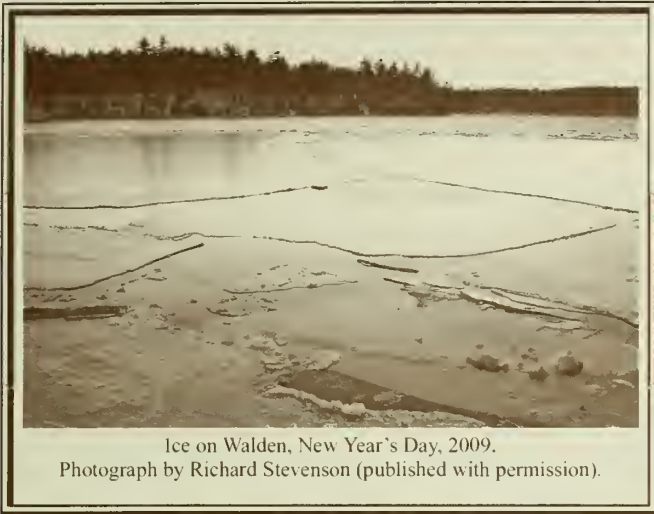
<sup>22</sup> Thoreau, *Walden*, 135.

<sup>23</sup> Jung, *The Collected Works*, 7: 237-238.

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<sup>26</sup> Thoreau, *Walden*, 98.



Ice on Walden, New Year's Day, 2009.  
Photograph by Richard Stevenson (published with permission).

## Consciousness: The Inside Story

*Steve Perrin*

I have been following research on consciousness since 1979. I now blog about exploring the only mind to which I have direct access—my own—so to test and update what I have learned on the subject (<http://onmymynd.wordpress.com>). Thoreau lived, as the rest of us live, in two worlds, a world of inner consciousness and a world of physical action. When he addressed an audience, he anchored his words to his inner, but cast them into his outer world, striving to create an outer effect consistent with his inner awareness. In his journal, Thoreau was ever mindful of the audience that might contemplate his meaning. I based the following blog (posted last October 15; slightly edited for inclusion in the *TSB*) on two paragraphs he wrote in 1850.

### Reflection 7: Thoreau as Blogger:

Like Job, Samuel Pepys, and Eleanor Roosevelt, Henry David Thoreau would probably have been a blogger in his day if he'd had access to the Web. As it was, he took pencil and paper with him on his excursions through fields and woods, so logging the progress of his experiences from 1837 to 1862. In his journal, as in *Walden*, Thoreau was witness to two worlds

at once, both to his sensory world and his charged mindfulness of that world. On November 21, 1850, a month from the winter solstice, with the sun shining at a slant to the landscape, he wrote:

Some distant angle in the sun where a lofty and dense white pine wood with mingled grey & green meets a hill covered with shrub oaks, affects me singularly—reinspiring me with all the dreams of my youth. It is a place far away—yet actual and where we have been—

In the next sentence he replays the image, trying to get it right:

I saw the sun falling on a distant white pine wood whose grey & moss covered stems were visible amid the green—in an angle where this forest abutted on a hill covered with shrub oaks—It was like looking into dream land— It is one of the avenues to my future.

Which opens onto the following comment:

Certain coincidences like this are accompanied by a certain flash as of hazy lightning—flooding all the world suddenly with a tremulous serene light which it is difficult to see long at a time.

On this day Thoreau's consciousness is flooded as by hazy lightning, requiring great effort to couple the concrete being of the scene with meaning as derived from his prior experience. Yet he is deeply moved. In fact, in the next paragraph being and meaning become wholly decoupled and Thoreau finds himself at a loss for ready understanding of his world. He is wholly unprepared to approach it on the basis of who he is. Which is not a bad thing because it leads to a profound insight into his relationship with the world in the paragraph following:

I saw Fair Haven pond with its Island & meadow between the island & the shore—and a strip of perfectly still & smooth water in the lee of the island—and two hawks—fish hawks perhaps—sailing over it[.] I did not see how it could be improved— Yet I do not see what these things can be. I begin to see such an object when I cease to *understand* it—and see that I did not realize or appreciate it before—but I get no further than this. How adapted these forms and colors to my eye—a meadow & an island; what are these things? Yet the hawks & the ducks keep so aloof! and nature is so reserved! I am made to love the pond & the meadow as the wind is made to ripple the water.

Thoreau's journal entry is remarkably well-suited for conversion into a blog. It clearly reveals the structure of conscious experience in balancing, or synchronizing, concrete sensory input with abstract or conceptual meaning supplied by the observer because that is *how we are made*. That is the essence of consciousness as selected for over the millions of years it has taken to evolve into its present form. Indeed, each of us is *made*—has evolved—to understand the world precisely in terms of accrued life experience. That balance, then, is the basis for extending our individual streams of consciousness into unknown tomorrows.

Above all, we are made to do all this with a strong feeling of love—or perhaps fear, yearning, hurt, anger, or curiosity—that sets the tone for a particular excursion. In

## Let Henry Speak

Bernard A. Drew



"Snow-Laden Pitch Pines"—photograph by Herbert Wendell Gleason, from Volume 3 of the 1906 Manuscript Edition of Thoreau's *Journal*.

The value of the pitch pine in winter is that it holds the snow so finely. I see it now afar on the hill-sides decking itself . . . Its whited towers forming coverts where the rabbit & the grey-squirrel lurk. It makes the most cheerful winter scenery beheld from the window—you know so well the nature of the coverts & the somber light it makes.

*Journal*, January 31, 1852

consciousness, it all comes together—sensory phenomena, personal meanings, feelings, and a sense that the coherent unity of these different elements represents a fitness to who we are as representatives of our people (tribe, society, culture, species) in this way, at this time, in this place.

[www.thoreausociety.org](http://www.thoreausociety.org)

What reader of Henry David Thoreau doesn't yearn to hear the true voice of the nature-walker? To sit in the third chair at pondside and absorb his stories first-hand? Over the last half-century, many sound recordings have matched the human voice to Thoreau's texts. As a collector in this genre, I have listened carefully for Thoreau in such productions, sampling them for style and authenticity.

My oldest recording is a 1958 Audio Book Company album of six 7-inch vinyl 16 2/3 rpm recordings by stage and film actor John Carradine. Simply titled *Walden*, it includes a written foreword by Havelock Ellis. The green cover art is of a dreamy Walden I've never seen, but the sound is sincere, rich, and resonant. I found that my stereo would play it only at Alvin-the-Chipmunk speed (33 1/3), so I slowed the turntable by hand to hear it properly. But I couldn't picture erudite Carradine as Thoreau.

An *Interview with Henry David Thoreau*—a 1964 educators' package—features actor Hans Conried speaking as the Concordian. This Scott, Foresman LP was issued in a green box accompanied by a printed script (based on Thoreau's writings, with a female interviewer's questions interspersed) and a film strip. The strip has lost its blues, but the vocalization stands up and the excerpts are well chosen. It runs about fifty minutes. Conried's is a professional voice—he did a lot of radio and cartoon voices, after all—though he doesn't sound any more a New Englander than Carradine.

And that's what differentiates the sound recordings of Thoreau. Your collection will be shaped by how satisfied you, the listener, are with the voice of Thoreau. How much the writings have been abridged also factors in.

An online catalog search of WorldCat, the Library of Congress, the New York Public Library, the Concord Free Public Library, the Henley Library at the Thoreau Institute, and Amazon.com yielded listings of recordings by Christopher Childs, Buckley Kozlow, Pierce Randel, Olaf Hansen, Jim Killavey, Larry McKeever, Adams Morgan, Chris Masterson, Eve Le Gallienne, and Wendy McElroy. Most are on 33 1/3 rpm LPs or cassettes (none on wax cylinder, 8-track, 45 or 78 rpm). A second-hand copy of a 1974 issue by Euell (Stalking the Wild Asparagus) Gibbons was beyond my budget, but stoked my curiosity. The longevity of the 1970s Archibald MacLeish recording, re-released in the 1990s, is unusual. Most producers have preferred to start fresh.

Barnes & Noble Audio brought out *Walden and Other Writings*, read by Pete Bradbury on six cassettes, in 1981. It condenses the prose to about six hours. Bradbury's inflections hold the listener's attention, but they don't sound Thoreauvian. The recording is apparently out of print, but other versions are easier to acquire—for example, *Thoreau & Emerson: Nature & Spirit* (two cassettes, Audio Partners Publishing, 1992), a repackaging of some older recordings, with professorial Howard Mumford Jones reading *Walden* and husky-sounding Russ Barnett reading *On Civil Disobedience*.

I wanted to like the 1992 *Walden, or, Life in the Woods*, read by Michael O'Keefe, on two cassettes from Shambala



Lion Editions, in part because the box features cover art by Michael McCurdy, who is a friend as well as a Thoreau illustrator. But my mind wandered as I listened to O'Keefe's too-steady intonation. William Hope condenses *Walden* to five and a quarter hours on four CDs (Naxos Audiobooks, 2001), with introductory piano music. Hope gives a yeoman's reading—no complaint, except that he does not sound like a Yankee. *Walden* in mp3 format from CDBooks.com came out around 2007. It appears to be the full text in ten hours, read in a hiccuppy, computer-generated voice. My ears tired after a few minutes. Another mp3 version of *Walden*, skillfully read by the experienced Gord McKenzie, was issued by LibriVox, also circa 2007. The full material runs fifteen hours and is in the public domain. It may be downloaded free from <http://librivox.org/walden-by-henry-david-thoreau/>, along with thirty-two other pieces (stories, essays, and poems) by Thoreau. "Wow" value, reasonable sound.

I haven't examined the pricey, full-length Blackstone Audiobooks recordings by Patrick Cullen of *Cape Cod* (seven CDs, six tapes or one mp3 disc) and *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (eleven CDs, ten tapes or one mp3 disc) and by Pat Bottino of *Walden and Civil Disobedience* (ten tapes). Maybe they hit the mark. But I ventured in a different direction.

I found something truly "off the trail," *Tourist Season: Henry David Thoreau & The Maine Woods (What Really Happened)*, based on an original script by home-grown humorist Travis H. W. Wallace. It is available on a two-CD set from Great Northern Comedy Company (2004). It was recorded live at Barnstormers Theatre in Tamworth, New Hampshire—and sounds it. An amateur ensemble takes a good-natured poke at Thoreau's dealings with his publisher, his purchase of a wagon and horse in preparation for a trip to Maine (to write a "reality" book), and his selection of an Indian guide. It uses none of Thoreau's real words that I could discern.

Apparently no commercial recording exists of the 1971 two-act, eight-character Robert Edwin Lee and Jerome Lawrence play *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail*, despite its frequent live performance. But folksinger, songwriter and upstate New York native Michael Johnathon's Earth Day-themed radio drama *Walden: The Ballad of Thoreau*, ably acted and recorded, is available free at the Internet site <http://www.waldenplay.com/walden-radio-drama.php>. The play depicts Thoreau in the final two days he spent at his cabin, in conversation with Emerson, a young man named Joshua Barnett, and a young woman named Rachel Stuers. It deploys Thoreau's words in what the author explains "is a conversation and intellectual argument that occurs between two old colleagues who love and respect each other a great deal." A companion musical CD, *Walden: The EarthSong Collection* (Poetman Records USA, 2007) contains eleven pleasant tunes by Johnathon (all but two original), including "Henry's Lullaby" and "The Cabin."

*The Fable True: Stories from Thoreau's The Maine Woods* is by David Mallett, another veteran folksinger and a sixth-generation Maine inhabitant. For this 2007 CD from North Road Records, Mallett selected twenty-two riffs from Thoreau's Maine writings and shaped acoustic guitar and some fiddle around them, in a style akin to the talking blues of Woody Guthrie or Johnny Cash. Thoreau's musings about fishing and loons are upbeat gems. I was particularly drawn

to his thoughts on the highest and best use of pine trees and humans. Listening to this recording, it's easy to drift to an imaginary campfire and to visualize Thoreau rambling about Old Town canoes and native guides and what to pack for a trip. Mallett told the *Bangor Daily News* he'd found verification of Thoreau's fondness for music in the writer's journals. "It made him fearless, and connected him to all things present and all things past." Mallett has a rich New England voice. I've listened to the CD more times than I expected, and gone to the bookshelf to re-read *The Maine Woods* as a result. That may be the highest tribute to any Thoreau sound recording.

## The CFPL's Thoreau Books Project

Constance Manoli-Skocay

### Henry David Thoreau's Personal Library:

In 1873, Concord dedicated its new, stately, neo-Gothic library. Fittingly, its acute angles pointed upward, reminiscent of church steeples, leading the eye heavenward. Its dominating presence, tempered by graceful architectural details, was a monument to the foresight of its founder, William Munroe.

The opening of Concord's first public library building inspired many donations, ranging from books and pamphlets to fine art, photographs, coins, manuscripts, autographs, and—most particularly—rich documentation of local history, life, landscape, and literature. Concordians embraced the new facility as a secure, professionally-staffed repository for the town's heritage.

In this spirit, Sophia Thoreau—the last surviving member of the local Thoreau family—deposited the many volumes of her brother's manuscript journal, described in the 1874 Concord Town Report as "between forty or fifty closely written books of memoranda of the natural history of Concord and of the Indians who made this locality their home and hunting ground." She also deposited nearly two hundred of his draft surveys and the accompanying field notes in an iron safe in the town's new library. All were at first merely deposited, not yet donated, and were kept in the library under the trusteeship of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Upon her death two years later, Sophia bequeathed her brother's journals to his friend Harrison Gray Otis Blake of Worcester and his surveys, field notes, and the 1854 Rowse crayon portrait of him to the Concord Free Public Library.

Around the time she deposited the journals and surveys in the CFPL, Sophia Thoreau also gave outright several dozen books from her brother's personal collection. Today, these volumes represent the single largest intact group of books once owned by Thoreau. They form a permanent part of the library's collection and are housed in a locked, glass-front bookcase in the Special Collections. The Thoreau Books consist of fifty-one titles (totaling sixty-four volumes), with publication dates ranging from 1776 to 1869. Notable volumes include Charles Davies's *Elements of Surveying* (1847), A

*Code of Gentoo Laws . . . from a Persian Translation* (1776), given to Thoreau by his friend Thomas Cholmondeley, and an edition of Cholmondeley's *Ultima Thule*. (A full descriptive finding aid is accessible at [http://www.concordlibrary.org/scollect/Fin\\_Aids/ThoreauBooks.htm](http://www.concordlibrary.org/scollect/Fin_Aids/ThoreauBooks.htm).) The books make up a rich collection of Thoreauviana, valuable in themselves because they were owned by Henry David Thoreau and represent the depth and breadth of subjects that interested him—natural history, Indian lore, philosophy, and history, for example—and which he incorporated into his work. Their indisputable provenance originates in the signatures and inscriptions, the annotations and marginalia in Thoreau's hand scattered throughout the pages, making them primary source material and providing clues to his thought processes.

Because Sophia had intended that her brother's books be used by the citizens of Concord, most became part of the circulating or reference collections. Exposed to frequent handling, many of the books deteriorated. Bindings loosened and boards became detached; pages were soiled, stained and torn; leather bindings were worn and abraded; spines split; and library markings defaced some bibliographical features. Over the years, some volumes were commercially rebound with cheap materials; others were subjected to inept repair. Several could no longer be handled due to their poor condition. Time and use had taken their toll on Thoreau's library.

#### Assistance Through the Community Preservation Act:

The Massachusetts Community Preservation Act (CPA) was signed into law in 2000. The act allows cities and towns in the Commonwealth to create local CPA funds to raise money through a surcharge of up to three percent of the tax levy on real property for projects in three categories: open space protection; historic preservation; and the provision of affordable housing. Doing so qualifies the town for state matching funds. Concord adopted the act in 2004. The scope of projects eligible for funds earmarked for historic preservation projects was subsequently expanded to include (in addition to structures) archival and manuscript materials, and the CFPL was encouraged to apply for a grant.

In addition to the Thoreau Books Project, other Thoreau-related projects recently funded through the CPA have included the preservation and restoration of the Henry David Thoreau birthplace at 341 Virginia Road (\$200,000; 2007) and landscape restoration at the birthplace by the Thoreau Farm Trust (\$10,000; 2008).

#### Steps in the CPA Grant Application Process:

In September 2007, Leslie Wilson, Curator of the William Munroe Special Collections at the Concord Free Public Library, applied to Concord's Community Preservation Committee for \$22,500. Along with a cost-share contribution by the Concord Free Public Library Corporation (legal owner of the library's Special Collections), this grant would fund the first of two phases of the two-year Thoreau Books Project. The project had three objectives: the systematic provision of professional conservation measures to repair significant damage sustained by twenty-two volumes from Thoreau's library; the application of professional

preservation measures to halt ongoing deterioration and stabilize volumes selected to undergo conservation treatment; and the creation of Web access to unique features such as inscriptions and annotations in all books from Thoreau's library (not just the books selected for treatment).

Wilson evaluated the collection to determine the volumes that would most benefit from conservation and preservation measures, taking into consideration their condition, frequency of use, provenance, and benefit to researchers. With these criteria in mind, twenty-one titles (twenty-two volumes) were chosen, packed, and transported to the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) in Andover, Massachusetts, where they remained for a month for evaluation. This is only one of many times that the Concord Free Public Library has relied upon the highly-skilled conservation and preservation services provided by NEDCC. Their previous work for the library has included: cleaning, lining, and encapsulating dozens of Thoreau's original surveys; cleaning, encapsulating, and binding the manuscript of his essay "Walking" (a dedication gift in 1873 from publisher James T. Fields); cleaning, repairing, and encapsulating a selection of broadsides; and performing multiple preservation measures on a volume of Wordsworth's poems inscribed to Nathaniel Hawthorne by Sophia Peabody (a recent gift by Hawthorne descendants).

The CPA grant was approved by vote on a warrant article at the 2008 Concord Town Meeting, and with that the work was ready to begin. The selected books were divided into two groups, one group to be treated during each year of the two-year project, and the batch designated for treatment during the first funding period was delivered to Andover in the summer of 2008.

#### Completion of Phase I of the Thoreau Books Project:

In December 2008, treatment was completed on the first group of books and they were returned to Special Collections, each volume housed in a phase box and accompanied by a written record of treatment. One significant item in this first batch is Charles Davies's *Elements of Surveying* (1847), from which Thoreau taught himself surveying techniques and which contains pencil annotations in his hand. (The late Bradley P. Dean consulted this volume in the course of his extensive research, as did scholar Patrick Chura in his exploration of Thoreau's work as a surveyor. Concord Museum Curator David Wood also examined it when preparing his catalog of Thoreau artifacts in the museum's collections.)

Prior to treatment, the leather binding of this valuable volume was worn and abraded, a portion of the spine was missing, the pages were dirty, discolored, and acidic, and library markings were evident. NEDCC technicians disbound the book, then repaired and rebaked the binding, retaining the original sewing. The pages were cleaned, tears mended, and loose pages reattached.

Other titles receiving treatment during Phase I of the project include Elizabeth Palmer Peabody's translation of Degérando's *Self-Education* (1830), as well as the second edition of *The New England Gazetteer* (1839), which Thoreau referred to in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* and which was loaned to the Concord Museum for the recent exhibit, "Building Thoreau's Boat." Perhaps the most visually dramatic change has been to four



folded maps (three of them hand-colored) issued in 1853 by the United States Department of the Treasury bound in a portfolio to accompany a report by Israel DeWolf Andrews. The maps (varying in size from 29"x 36" to 36"x 77") were unfolded, cleaned, lined, and encapsulated in polyester film.

Phase II of the Thoreau Books Project is in process as this article goes to press. Leslie Wilson has written the Phase II grant proposal and attended the requisite meetings. She presented the second part of the project at a public hearing on November 18, 2008. In the late autumn of 2008, the Concord Community Preservation Committee completed its review of the proposed projects and recommended funding for fifteen projects, including \$22,500 for Phase II of the Thoreau Books Project.

The next step will be putting the recommended projects to a vote as a warrant article at the 2009 Concord Town Meeting. If funding is approved, the second group of books will be packed and transported to NEDCC to undergo treatment similar to the first group. That accomplished, approximately a third of the CFPL's books from Thoreau's personal library will have undergone the conservation and preservation measures necessary to safeguard them as an intellectual resource for future generations of Thoreauvians.

## President's Column

Tom Potter



Tom Potter and his woodpile.

Photograph by Gayle Moore (published with permission).

Thoreau wrote in the "House-Warming" chapter of *Walden*, "Every man looks at his wood-pile with a kind of affection." He observed, too, how the splitting of stumps "warmed me twice, once while I was splitting them, and again when they were on the fire." I know from personal experience that those lines are on the mark. Each year, my neighbor Benny and I prepare to warm our cabins as we harvest the fallen trees and branches within our forty acres of woods. Sallie (my wife) reminds me that the wood warms us at other times, as well—when

we hunt for it, and when we haul it back to the cabin.

If considerable effort is required to keep a cabin livable during the cold winter months, so, too, is a significant commitment of personal energy necessary to keep the Thoreau Society running. Some of the folks who have recently accepted the challenge of helping the TS fulfill its mission include Laura Dassow Walls, our new editor of the *Concord Saunterer*, and Leslie Wilson, who has taken on the editorship of the *Thoreau Society Bulletin*. Bob Habich chairs the Standing Committee, which oversees the management of our valuable collections (housed in the Henley Library at the Thoreau Institute in Lincoln). And a number of other Board members carry on important ongoing activities—the oversight of financial matters, the election of officers and Board members, the planning of the Annual Gathering, and arranging for the move of the TS office to its new home in the Thoreau birthplace later this year.

We are always looking for TS members interested and willing to serve in various capacities, including Board membership. If you have the time, energy, and cooperative spirit required to work with a diverse group, I invite you to send me a note with "Thoreau" in the subject line.

Reflecting on the work of those who have invested their time and talents in the Thoreau Society, I leave the woodpile, return to the cabin to put another log in the stove, and recall the words that Thoreau wrote to his friend H. G. O. Blake on a cold December day:

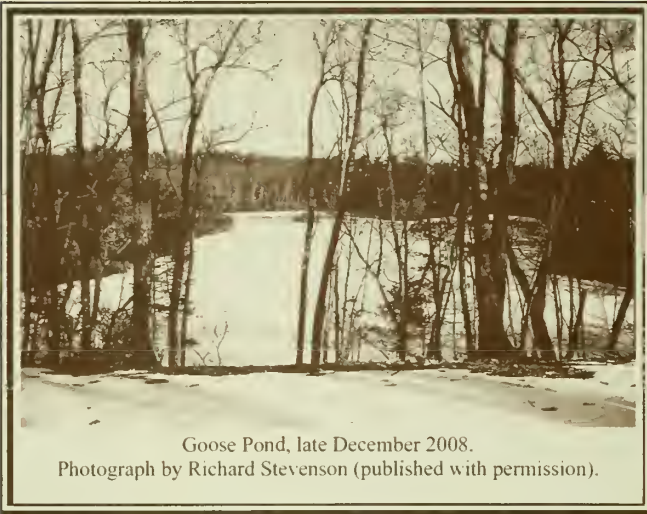
I just put another stick into my stove—a pretty large mass of white oak. How many men will do enough this cold winter to pay for the fuel that will be required to warm them? I suppose I have burned up a pretty good-sized tree tonight—and for what? I settled with Mr. Tarbell for it the other day; but that wasn't the final settlement. I got off cheaply from him. At last, one will say, "Let me see, how much wood did you burn, Sir?" And I shall shudder to think that the next question will be, "What did you do while you were warm?"

As we work to keep the Thoreau Society a vital enterprise, perhaps Thoreau is asking the same question of us.



Please submit items for the Spring  
*Bulletin* to your editor by  
April 1, 2009

Leslie Perrin Wilson  
lwilson@minlib.net



Goose Pond, late December 2008.  
Photograph by Richard Stevenson (published with permission).

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We are indebted to the following individuals for information used in this *Bulletin*: Bob Clarke, Marjorie Harding, Bob Maker, and Richard Winslow III. Please keep us informed of items not yet added and new items as they appear.

## Notes & Queries

Thanks to those whose work appears in this issue of the *TSB*. **Bernard A. Drew**, a journalist, local historian, reference book author, and resident of Great Barrington, Massachusetts, makes an annual pilgrimage to Walden Pond with his wife and daughters. Naturalist, essayist, and photographer **Steve Perrin**, who lives in Bar Harbor, Maine, walked with his brother in the 1950s from Kenmore Square in Boston to pay his respects at Thoreau's cairn at Walden. **Sandra Harbert Petrulionis** is Professor of English and American Studies at Penn State Altoona and the author of *To Set This World Right: The Antislavery Movement in Thoreau's Concord* (Cornell University Press, 2006). **William Rossi** is Associate Professor of English at the University of Oregon and editor of *Walden, Civil Disobedience, and Other Writings* (W. W. Norton, 2008). **Bill Schechter** (schech@rcn.com) taught at the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School for thirty-five years and now supervises student-teachers from Tufts University and edits a monthly electronic digest of excerpts from Thoreau's journal. **Constance Manoli-Skocay** is Staff Assistant in the William Munroe Special Collections of the Concord Free Public Library and has spent time in all seasons at Walden Pond as far back as she can remember. **Richard Stevenson** is a carpenter by profession and an amateur photographer, and has been a resident of Concord from the age of six. **Neil B. Yetwin** has taught global history, American history, and AP/IB psychology at the Schenectady (New York) High School for nearly thirty years.

Your editor also owes a debt of gratitude to **Dave Bonney**, **Ron Hoag**, **Bob Hudspeth**, and **Ed Schofield** for proofreading copy for *TSB* 265.

**Bill Bly** calls attention to the use of a quotation from Thoreau in an article about Cape Cod—"Happy Campers," by Marcia Passos Duffy—in the July/August 2008 issue of *Home & Away* (a magazine published by AAA Oklahoma).

**Clarence Burley** sends word of a number of Thoreau-related items, among them: recent research on the effects of climate change on the flora of Concord as discussed in a *Scientific American* blog ([http://www.sciam.com/blog/60-second-science/post.cfm?id=walden-pond-yellowstone-species-dyi-2008-10-28&sc=DD\\_20081029](http://www.sciam.com/blog/60-second-science/post.cfm?id=walden-pond-yellowstone-species-dyi-2008-10-28&sc=DD_20081029)); a November 23, 2008, *Worcester Telegram & Gazette* interview with Don Henley ("Citizen Henley pours music into Earth"), published in the *Worcester telegram.com* at <http://www.telegram.com/article/20081123/NEWS/811230441/-1/eworcester&template=eworcester>; a November 30, 2008, *Boston Globe* review by Katherine A. Powers of Geoff Nicholson's *The Lost Art of Walking*, published in *boston.com* at [http://www.boston.com/ae/books/articles/2008/11/30/pedestrian\\_pursuits/?page=1](http://www.boston.com/ae/books/articles/2008/11/30/pedestrian_pursuits/?page=1); a Winter 2008 piece ("The Nature of Healing") by Aldebra Schroll in *Northern Woodlands*, including a quotation from Thoreau's journal and reproducing a wood engraving by Barry Moser from *Nature's Panorama: Thoreau on the Seasons*;

and an *MSN Encarta* piece by Dean Christopher, "20 Things You Didn't Know About ... Pencils," at <http://encarta.msn.com/encnet/Features/Lists/?article=20ThingsPencils>.

**Randall Conrad** notices a piece by Brad Kane in the Boston *Sunday Globe* for October 19, 2008, about the Concord Museum's exhibit on Concord streets and street names, including Thoreau Street, which got its name "only after Emerson refused to have the street named after him."

**Rick Delano** has found a line from Thoreau in the *Yankee Magazine* online newsletter, at <http://campaign-archive.com/?u=3a44d786956aa578740994626&id=f585532c30&e=d6fffd0945>. If the line from Thoreau doesn't move you to check the page out, perhaps the Thanksgiving recipes there will provide additional incentive.

Jennifer Doerr, Publicity Manager for **Farrar, Straus and Giroux**, has forwarded a copy of *A Mystery for Thoreau* by Kin Platt (1911-2003), set in Concord in 1846 and first published in 2008. The central character of this fictional book for young readers is sixteen-year-old Oliver Puckle, a news-gatherer for the *Concord Freeman*. In solving the mystery of a murder at Walden Pond, Oliver learns much from fellow Concordian Henry Thoreau.

**Marjorie Harding** notes that Thoreau plays an inspirational role in the 2007 Denzel Washington movie *The Great Debaters*, about a black debate club that takes on Harvard in 1937 (subject: civil disobedience).

Certified Master Gardener **Susan Hobig** passes along Signe Wilkinson's comic strip *Family Tree* from the Detroit *Free Press* for July 13, 2008, in which an English-teacher grandmother urges her suburban grandson to experience the woods to gain insight into Thoreau. (Her advice is not fully understood.) Susan also informs us of an article by Daniel Imhoff in the December/January 2009 issue of *Mother Earth News* ("Farming with the Wild") referring to Thoreau's *Walden*, and of another mention of *Walden* in the same issue, in "Get Ready for a Great Year Outdoors" by Terry Krautwurst.

Long-time Thoreau Society member **Vic Hochee** announces the release of his new album on CD, *A Musical Portrait of Henry David Thoreau's Walden . . . from his words to our music* (Niche Records, 2008), a "collection of original music with voice-over quotes of Henry David Thoreau's profound and classic book." Your editor and two of her daughters took advantage of a quiet moment on Christmas morning to listen to the album, which includes fourteen pieces and has a total playing time of fifty-four minutes. More information is available at [www.nicherecords.org](http://www.nicherecords.org).

Former *TSB* editor **Bob Hudspeth** sends the comic strip *Frazz* from the October 26, 2008, issue of the Los Angeles *Times*. It features two famous lines from Thoreau—that about the mass of men leading lives of quiet desperation, and the warning against enterprises requiring new clothing.

From Leechburg, Pennsylvania, **Kris Schott** passes along word of a book review by Bob Hoover in the Pittsburgh *Post-Gazette* for November 23, 2008. Hoover criticizes Jay Parini for choosing *Walden* over *Civil Disobedience* in his 2008 Doubleday book, *Promised Land: Thirteen Books That Changed America*.

**Robert S. Schwantes** reports the publication of a piece by Ravi Vyas titled "Thoreau's truth" in the "Literary Review" section (under the header "Classics Revisited") of the December 7, 2008, issue of *The Hindu*, a newspaper published in Chennai, India. The article is accessible on the paper's website at <http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/lr/2008/12/07/stories/2008120750040200>.

htm. It opens, "*Walden* is convincing because the vivid details of the woods, the pond, and the seasons are used as a metaphor of his [Thoreau's] vision of a good life."

**Charles Shurcliff** of Ipswich, Massachusetts, has mailed a short review from *In Brief* (published by Earthjustice: [www.earthjustice.org](http://www.earthjustice.org)) of *The Virtues of Ignorance* by Bill Vitek and Wes Jackson (University of Kentucky Press, 2008). As the one-paragraph review explains, the title of the Vitek/Jackson book was based on a line from Thoreau: "How can we remember our ignorance, which our growth requires, when we are using our knowledge all the time?"

Always alert to Thoreau's impact on popular culture, **Corinne Smith** has found references to him in several recent comic strips (in *Pearls Before Swine* for December 2, 2008, accessible at [http://comics.com/pearls\\_before\\_swine/?DateAfter=2008-12-02&DateBefore=2008-12-02&Order=d.DateStrip+DESC&PerPage=1&Search=&x=33&y=7](http://comics.com/pearls_before_swine/?DateAfter=2008-12-02&DateBefore=2008-12-02&Order=d.DateStrip+DESC&PerPage=1&Search=&x=33&y=7); also, in *Sherman's Lagoon* for December 25, 2008, and subsequent days, the comic strip for Christmas accessible at <http://www.slagoon.com/cgi-bin/sviewer.pl?selectdate=12/25/08> and those for later installments also in the electronic archives). Corinne sends word, as well, of the use of a passage from a March 27, 1848, letter from Thoreau to H. G. O. Blake in the front matter of Pico Iyer's *The Open Road: The Global Journey of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2008).

**Mark Sullivan** writes of the abundance of information about N. C. Wyeth's Thoreau-inspired paintings in Christine Podmaniczky's *N. C. Wyeth: Catalogue Raisonné* (Brandywine River Museum and Wyeth Foundation for American Art in collaboration with Scala Publishers, 2008).

Allison Thomas, Associate Marketing Manager for the **University of Iowa Press**, provides the following URL for information on a forthcoming book by David K. Leff, *Deep Travel: In Thoreau's Wake on the Concord and Merrimack*, due out in 2009: <http://www.uiowapress.org/books/2009-spring/leff.htm>.

And, finally, **Richard Winslow** communicates several items, among them the publication in the Winter 2006 issue of the *South Atlantic Review* of a piece by James Emmett Ryan on Stephanie Browner's *Profound Science and Elegant Literature: Imagining Doctors in Nineteenth-Century America* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), in which Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, and Dickinson are mentioned in connection with the medical practices of their era, and the article "Best Books for Wiser Living" in the April/May 2008 issue of *Mother Earth News*, which includes one reader's statement of the importance to him of Thoreau's *Walden*.

Thanks to all who submitted information for this column. Please keep it coming for future issues of the *Bulletin*.

## Waking Giant: A Review

*Sandra Harbert Petrulionis*

David S. Reynolds. *Waking Giant: America in the Age of Jackson*. New York: HarperCollins, 2008. 466p.

Military invasion of a sovereign nation without provocation, financial crises induced by a chief executive's mismanagement, a divided electorate, vastly expanded



presidential power, the rise of evangelism, an arrogant United States. Whether or not you subscribe to a theory of history's cyclicity, David S. Reynolds's *Waking Giant: America in the Age of Jackson* reminds us that we've seen all this before.

Henry Thoreau asks in *Walden*, "Why should we live with such hurry and waste of life?" Shortly after, he observes that "men think that it is essential that the *Nation* have commerce, and export ice, and talk through a telegraph, and ride thirty miles an hour," one of the book's many laments about the increasing, and, to Thoreau, deleterious pace of the epoch in which he was born. Too often we read *Walden* in a vacuum, vaguely aware that Thoreau lived in a real place and time, but with scant appreciation for the hard realities of his America—its violent political battles, sewage-clogged streets, starving and overworked children, thousands of "lives of quiet desperation" right next door in genteel Boston.

Aimed toward a general audience, *Waking Giant* presents the development—and entrenchment—of Jacksonian America, 1815-1848, from President Monroe through President Polk, an age Reynolds deems "arguably the richest in American life" (1). This, however, is the America against which Thoreau rails in *Walden*—a nation swaggering into a sense of itself, an increasingly literate but thoughtless populace, a melting pot in the making. It was an era of financial meltdowns, political upheaval, war with Mexico, the birth of a "middle" class, newspaper proliferation, Jim Crow minstrel shows, mob mentality, and P. T. Barnum's sucker audiences. Reynolds primarily examines familiar incidents and figures from this transformative period, when America grew from a dispersed agrarian population of slightly fewer than ten million people in 1820 to almost triple that number by 1848. Hundreds of thousands of immigrants congregated in new urban centers, many toiling in the industrial nightmares of Rebecca Harding Davis's *Life in the Iron Mills*, or closer to Thoreau's home, in the Lowell and Fall River textile mills, belching reminders of the North's intimate relation to slavery. Lest we forget, it was also a time when national policy toward native peoples became genocide and when more than three million African Americans remained slaves. Importantly, Reynolds points out that during this era, America began to interrogate itself as the Manifest Destiny championed by many horrified others, as the march to the Pacific demanded first the resettlement and soon the wholesale slaughter of Native Americans, and as an expanding Union delivered slavery to half a million new square miles of the nation's interior.

The book's seven chapters cover discrete topics, including "Political Fights, Popular Fêtes," "God's Many Kingdoms," "Reforms, Panaceas, Inventions, Fads," and "Rebellion and Renaissance." *Waking Giant* thus provides a cultural and political history of primarily white, predominantly eastern America during this formative era. Although reform movements and minority figures make appearances in, rather than form a focus of, this study, they raise the issues—among them "The Native American Problem" (315)—that President Jackson and his successors faced.

Reynolds finds populist seventh president Andrew Jackson, hero of the Battle of New Orleans, an admirable figure in many respects, and maintains that Jackson's "shortcomings reflected his era" (2). With regard to what many hold as Jackson's most duplicitous and egregious crime, the Indian Removal Act, Reynolds contends that "severe" though they were, these policies were more or less inherited from preceding administrations. In carrying them

out, Jackson at least displayed "a consistency of purpose" (82). Reynolds argues, moreover, that calling attention to Jackson as a racist "is misleading" (121), since most white Americans at the time—even abolitionists—rarely supported racial equality. Ultimately, Reynolds judges Jackson "one of the rarities in American politics: a man whose personal magnetism transcended his flaws" (72).

Reynolds correctly assesses that Thoreau and Emerson "had a complex relationship to Jacksonian America" (248). Indeed, some in their Transcendentalist circle formed part of Jackson's admiring throng. After seeing Old Hickory during his 1833 tour of New England, Charles Chauncy Emerson described his sense of national pride to his aunt, Mary Moody Emerson: "You feel there is a reality in the ties of citizenship which bind you to the millions that people this wide lying land . . . We have a common property in him."<sup>1</sup> One is hard pressed to argue with Reynolds's conclusion that Jackson's brash individualism was pure Emersonian self-reliance, of a sort. Yet even as the Transcendentalists, particularly Emerson, recoiled from the vulgarity of popular culture, they sympathized with democratic reform and incorporated into their writings the idioms and comic sketches gleaned from their reading. To Reynolds, Thoreau's *Walden* experiment was "a one-man plug in the dam that held back full-fledged capitalism" (258); he judges that *Walden*'s prose—for example, the battle of the ants and the notion of devouring a woodchuck raw—became more sensational in its seven-year genesis as a direct result of Thoreau's reading. As for Emerson, Thoreau's relationship to the materialistic exuberance and populist rant of Jacksonian America remained complex and largely uncomfortable.

Reynolds treats Thoreau, Emerson and the Transcendentalists as both social reformers and literary figures; his discussion of nineteenth-century science provides useful context for Thoreau's developing professionalization as a natural historian. Like Thoreau, antebellum scientists tended to be multi-focused, their intellectual curiosity and empirical investigations covering an array of disciplines. Reynolds shows that medical science's shortcomings, however, led Americans at this time to experiment with a plenitude of homeopathic remedies, including the "water cure" to which Louisa May Alcott often resorted in an attempt to find relief for recurring pain brought on by the mercury-laden calomel treatments she had received when stricken with typhoid as a young woman.

A profitable way to read this book, as I did, is to immerse yourself in *Walden* simultaneously, understanding that when Thoreau castigates "mean and sneaking lives," he has in mind the financial bailouts, illegitimate wars, and violated human liberties of his time. On the one hand, Thoreauvians can thank Jackson's America for inspiring Thoreau; on the other, many of us were surely dismayed five years ago when the sesquicentennial of *Walden* found us once again beset with national malaise at home and dangerous braggadocio abroad. The era's excesses—what Reynolds dubs the "—est factor," as in biggest, loudest, strongest, best—are ours; the "profound contradictions" (34) of antebellum America remain with us. As Reynolds aptly notes in his Epilogue, the Jacksonian era "never ended" (365). How well we know it.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Charles Chauncy Emerson to Mary Moody Emerson, 22-24 June [1834]. Quoted from Emerson family correspondence in the Houghton Library, Harvard University, as transcribed by Ronald Bosco and Joel Myerson, with the permission of the transcribers.

## Notes from Concord

### Michael Frederick, Executive Director

As the Thoreau Society continues to carry out its mission to stimulate interest in and foster education about Thoreau's life, works, and legacy, we are asking our supporters to consider making a gift to this year's annual appeal to help us maintain our initiatives. Your support will ensure our ability to engage university and college professionals as well as the interested public with Thoreau and his importance to multidisciplinary studies and contemporary issues. Your support at any level is important and much appreciated.

With so much going on, it has been a productive and exciting year for us. Laura Dassow Walls became the editor of the *Concord Saunterer: A Journal of Thoreau Studies* and is working with the Publications Committee to revitalize the journal and attract leading scholarship on Thoreau and Transcendental Concord. In April we inaugurated our first annual Thoreau Society Lyceum series and hosted three speakers, including William Moomaw, a lead author for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the group that shared the Nobel Peace Prize with Al Gore, for their report on global warming. In July we held a provocative and engaging Annual Gathering, with attendees discussing and presenting their ideas on "The Individual and the State: The Politics of Thoreau in Our Time."

This fall we enhanced our public outreach efforts by disseminating information about the Thoreau Society and its role as the Friends of Walden Pond at events in Boston, Cambridge, and Boston Metro-North. These activities culminated in our promotion of the Arlo Guthrie concert in November, which also helped to raise additional proceeds for the Society, in lieu of an online auction this year.

Looking forward to later on in 2009, the Society anticipates moving into the Thoreau birthplace, which is currently undergoing restoration and should be ready to accommodate our offices by late spring. The Society continues to maintain its collections at the Thoreau Institute. Work on a finding aid for the Walter Harding Collection, funded by a \$10,000 gift to the Society in 2007, is underway and will be completed this year.

You may recall that the Thoreau Society Board of Directors is contributing \$11,600 to this year's annual appeal because of their strong belief in the strength and importance of our organization. With the addition of your generous support, together we will enable the Thoreau Society to continue providing a network of resources to members and the community that ensure Thoreau's continued relevance around the world.

Our fiscal year ends March 31, 2009. All contributions are tax deductible.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

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Established in 1941, the **Thoreau Society, Inc.**, is an international nonprofit organization with a mission to stimulate interest in and foster education about Thoreau's life, works, legacy, and his place in his world and in ours, challenging all to live a deliberate, considered life. The Thoreau Society has the following organizational goals:

- To encourage research on Thoreau's life and works and to act as a repository for Thoreau-related materials
- To educate the public about Thoreau's ideas and their application to contemporary life
- To preserve Thoreau's legacy and advocate for the preservation of Thoreau country

Membership in the Society includes subscriptions to its two publications, the *Thoreau Society Bulletin* (published quarterly) and *The Concord Saunterer: A Journal of Thoreau Studies* (published annually). Society members receive a 10% discount on all merchandise purchased from the Thoreau Society Shop at Walden Pond and advance notice about Society programs, including the Annual Gathering.

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